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FACT SHEET

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Trust and Confidence in the California Courts: Phase 2

In 2005, the Judicial Council of California undertook a statewide survey of the public and of practicing attorneys to determine current levels of trust and confidence in the state courts, and to obtain information concerning expectations and performance of the state courts. The survey, phase 1 of an ongoing trust and confidence assessment, reached over 2,400 members of the public and over 500 practicing attorneys.

Phase 2

The Judicial Council of California's landmark 2005 study *Trust and Confidence in the California Courts: A Survey of the Public and Attorneys* will be the foundation for phase 2 of the council's trust and confidence assessment. In phase 2 researchers will delve more deeply into key issues raised by stakeholders. Using focus groups and other research methodology, researchers will seek direct information from court users—new information that will yield specific, effective strategies for addressing customer concerns identified by the 2005 survey.

In addition, the phase 2 researchers will solicit input from two previously untapped stakeholder groups—judicial officers and court administrators—to yield an insiders' perspective on the California courts as well as identify possible means of improving the delivery of justice.

Areas of Focus

The following six thematic areas that emerged from the 2005 survey results will be explored in phase 2:

Receiving and seeking court information

Less than one person in five believes that they are “intimately” or “broadly” familiar with the courts. What media and specific forms of education or communication should be used to disseminate information about the courts to the public?

Experience in a court case: Incidence and consequences

Direct experience with a court case is common, largely through jury service. Serving on a jury is associated with distinctly higher approval, and involvement in a family, juvenile, or traffic case with distinctly lower approval (the same pattern is present for perceptions of procedural fairness). What specific means are available, feasible, or possible to improve ratings for individuals involved in these cases?

Barriers to taking a case to court

The cost of hiring an attorney is the most commonly cited potential barrier to court access. What specific partnerships or expanded role for self-help centers—as well as other alternatives to court adjudication—could be developed?

Diversity and the needs of a diverse population

The diversity of the public served by California's trial courts is striking—31 percent of all survey respondents were born outside the United States. What specific programs and partnerships can the courts develop to help these Californians?

Fairness in procedures and outcomes

Procedural fairness, the sense that decisions have been made through processes that are fair, is the strongest predictor by far of whether members of the public approve of or have confidence in the California courts. What specific training changes can be implemented to ensure that all court staff and judicial officers recognize the importance of quality service in administering justice?

Expectations and performance

Reporting on job performance is the number one unmet need cited by survey respondents (regarding what the courts should be doing but are not doing well). What specific performance measures and presentation mediums would be useful to the public?

How Will the Information Be Used?

The phase 2 results, to be delivered in June 2006, will inform the Judicial Council's 2006–2012 strategic planning cycle, including its reassessment of the branchwide strategic plan. The results will also assist the AOC and trial courts in establishing a course of direction and in improving training, public education, and community outreach.

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Additional resources:

The 2005 phase 1 survey report is available at
www.courtinfo.ca.gov/reference/4_37pubtrust.htm

Highlights of the phase 1 survey results are described in a companion fact sheet entitled
“Trust and Confidence in the California Courts: Phase 1,” available at
www.courtinfo.ca.gov/reference/factsheets.htm